The Sustainable Primary Industries (SPI) project of UNU-IAS OUIK held a public seminar on 10 March 2014 under the theme of “Research on Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Noto and its Future Directions”. The venue of the public seminar was the Shiinoki Cultural Complex in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan. The SPI project endeavors, through community-based research, to propose policy recommendations catered to the needs of the local community, to address the challenges of aging and depopulation in declining rural areas due to globalization and modernization. Its key research areas include the development of Noto’s Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) in order to contribute to revaluation and reconstruction of the Satoyama-Satoumi landscape, and the potential for multi-stakeholder participation in revitalization of rural areas. The seminar welcomed project researchers, advisors, local officials and representatives from the local community, who have assisted the SPI project, to share their views on the project findings thus far, and to discuss the future directions and challenges of research on sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries in Noto. The seminar was attended by 61 participants, and was co-organized with Ishikawa Prefecture. The seminar programme is attached in Annex 1.

Opening:

In his opening address, Mr. Tsunao Watanabe, Director of the Operating Unit Ishikawa/Kanazawa (UNU-IAS OUIK), welcomed all the distinguished speakers and participants to the seminar. Referring to Noto’s vision of reviving and restoring its Satoyama landscape as a habitat for the Japanese Crested Ibis, Mr. Watanabe pointed out that it is interesting to explore the factors that contributed to Noto being the last habitat for wild Japanese Crested Ibis before its extinction in Japan in the 1970s. He believes that one of the reasons could be the traditional and sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices in Noto that supported the rich Satoyama environment. He also noted the importance of connections and exchange between cities and rural villages, as well as shared understanding among producers and consumers as playing a vital role in establishing such relationships. Food and culinary culture could bridge this gap, and in that sense agriculture is the key to rural revitalization. He expressed his hopes that the seminar would serve as a platform for active discussion, and that by sharing the SPI research, some hints could be provided on how to rejuvenate Noto’s agriculture.

Mr. Akira Nagata, Senior Programme Coordinator, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)
In his presentation on the Sustainable Primary Industries (SPI) Research Project on Noto GIAHS, Mr. Nagata gave an overview of the project team structure, objectives and research activities that have been undertaken since it started in 2012. With the Noto region as its research area, SPI aims to research (1) societal and economic impacts brought about by revitalization measures; and (2) effects on reconstruction of rural communities through conservation of Satoyama-Satoumi and enhancing its resilience. The objective is to revalue and reconstruct Satoyama-Satoumi landscapes by conducting research on GIAHS-related initiatives with a focus on multi-stakeholder participation in rural revitalization efforts. The research results will be provided to local governments, such as the Ishikawa Prefectural Government, in the form of policymaking recommendations and will also contribute to global research related to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The key activities and outcomes of the past two years include background research based on field-based data collection researches in Noto with local farmers on initiatives aimed at making optimal usage of GIAHS designation, information and data analysis, and reflecting these findings in academic journal publications and online magazines.

Under its global outreach activities, the SPI project has also organized international events to promote understanding of sustainable traditional agriculture. These include a workshop on “Experiences and Lessons of Dynamic Conservation and Sustainable Development from Asian GIAHS Pilot Sites” held in Kanazawa on 28 May 2013, a side event on “Traditional Agriculture Systems and Food Security” held at TICADV in Yokohama on 2 June 2013, and an SPI project poster participation at the Fourth IPSI Global Conference in Fukui on 9 May 2013. Building on its close cooperative links with researchers and experts on agricultural heritage systems from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the SPI project also co-organized the “The International Workshop for Sustainable Agricultural Heritage Conservation Management: Korea-China-Japan International Workshop in Jeju & Cheongsando for Agricultural Heritage Network and Cooperation”, which was held on Jeju Island and Cheongsan Island of the Republic of Korea from 26-28 August 2013. These global outreach efforts by the SPI project contributed to the establishment of the East Asia Research Association for Agricultural Heritage Systems (ERAHS) in Beijing, China on 22 October 2013. This association aims to promote research collaboration, information sharing and improved scientific communication regarding agricultural heritage systems among countries in East Asia. The SPI project endeavors to work closely with the Ishikawa Prefecture Satoyama Creation Office on the three pillars (field research, international cooperation and outreach) by focusing its research on addressing local needs and fostering partnerships with local stakeholders in Noto and Ishikawa Prefecture.

Dr. Chen Bixia, Assistant Professor, University of the Ryukyus and former Research Associate, OUIK

Dr. Chen first expressed her thanks for the generous support provided to her over the previous three years at OUIK before she relocated to the University of the Ryukyus in December 2013. In her presentation on “Research Findings of the SPI Project in Noto”, Dr. Chen explained how the research has been based on the overarching theme of assessing the resilience of agricultural heritage systems. Corresponding research has been conducted under three sub-themes focusing on enhancing (1) ecological resilience through conservation of Satoyama-Satoumi landscapes; (2) social resilience through adopting a new commons approach to encourage multi-stakeholder participation; (3) economic resilience through creation of new business models for primary industries. Under the ecological resilience sub-theme, the role of “mizuban” (water pond managers) in mitigating the impacts of droughts in Notojima was examined. It was found that Neya Village, which engages a communal mizuban to regulate water distribution, was relatively more effective at bridging the
period of water scarcity in the summer of 2012 than other villages without mizuban. Under the social resilience sub-theme, she examined the Shiroyone Senmaida rice terrace ownership system in Wajima City, where urbanites can support conservation of the rice terraces by participating in farming and harvesting activities or making a financial contribution. It was found that although the ownership system has gained a popular following and has raised awareness regarding the conservation of rice terraces in Noto, most participants appreciate the rice terraces for their aesthetic value as a remarkable landscape over their role as an agricultural system. Hence Dr. Chen pointed out the need to ensure that farmers’ activities are economically profitable in order to guarantee the sustainable conservation of the rice terraces and other paddies in Noto. In her view, the branding of rice that contributes to the conservation of rice terraces could be one such option and therefore the ownership system has served as an effective catalyst for more active efforts.

Under the economic resilience sub-theme, Dr. Chen introduced her extensive survey work with farmers participating in the “Kao-no-mieru Yasaî” (literally “vegetables from farmers whom you can recognize”) scheme. Under this system, traditional vegetables and vegetables grown by these small-scale farmers in Noto are transported to Kanazawa City twice a day for deliveries. These small-scale farmers, most of whom are at least 70 years old, explained that the scheme had been well-received. This was due not only to its profitability based on the direct sales, but also to the farmers having relatively greater freedom to decide what they like to produce and enjoying the exchange of information with other farmers participating in the scheme. Dr. Chen also conducted interviews with foreign tourists visiting farm inns in Noto’s Shunran-no-sato to determine the perspectives of foreigners regarding the aesthetic beauty of traditional Japanese rural landscapes and the hospitality of farming communities. She then provided these findings to the owners of the farm inns for their feedback. In conclusion, Dr. Chen explained that further details of her research had also been published in various journal articles that she published over the previous three years with the generous support of the people of Ishikawa Prefecture.

**Discussion**

Prof. Koji Nakamura (Visiting Professor, UNU-IAS/Deputy President, Kanazawa University) chaired the discussion session on the SPI project research outcomes and the development of the Noto GIAHS. Panelists included Ms. Akiko Kado (Representative, Anamizu Town Regional Promotion Association), Mrs. Hiroko Tada (Owner, Shunran-no-sato Farm Inn), Mr. Shigenobu Fujita (Counsellor, Ohzora Agricultural Cooperative – JA Ohzora), Mr. Tsutomu Okumoto (Director, Satoyama Creation Office, Ishikawa Prefecture), as well as Mr. Nagata and Dr. Chen as commentators. Ms. Kado introduced the “Notoriana” project in Anamizu Town, where the slow food and tranquil lifestyle share much in common with Italy, and inspiring the name Notoriana which combines “Noto” with “Italiana”. Ms. Kado shared that the project was launched in 2009 with support from Ishikawa Prefecture to promote the slow food culture. The bountiful agricultural products and seafood of Anamizu Town has started to gain wider attention, especially since the GIAHS designation of Noto Peninsula. Mrs. Tada shared that the 53 farm inns located in Shunran-no-sato, including her own, had received nearly 8,900 guests in 2013. Many of these were foreign visitors who came to experience the traditional culture and returned home impressed by the hospitality and beauty of rural life in Japan. She is thankful for the increasing attention, both domestically and internationally, since Noto received GIAHS designation. Everyone at Shunran-no-sato was particularly grateful and happy to
receive His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito’s visit on 30 October 2013, which was a great encouragement for them to continue their conservation efforts to protect the rural way of life in Shunran-no-sato.

Sharing information about efforts by local farmers since the GIAHS designation, Mr. Fujita said that while JA Ohzora began efforts to conserve 200 plots of rice terrace paddies since 1995, the efforts have definitely gained more momentum and taken off since the GIAHS designation. He explained that farmers are beginning to take the initiative in leading efforts rather than passively depending on the municipality offices. Examples of such initiatives include the branding of “Noto Tanada Rice” (literally, Noto terrace rice), which is used to sell rice grown with a 50 percent reduction in chemical inputs compared with conventional farming practices, while also ensuring conservation of the rice terraces. “Noto Rice” is another brand for promoting a 30 percent reduction in chemical inputs by 2014 on all koshihikari cultivation, which accounts for 60 percent of the total paddy fields in Noto (around 12,000 ha). After learning about the various efforts described by the panellists, Mr. Okumoto was very encouraged by the active measures being taken by local communities to make use of the GIAHS designation. He explained that the Satoyama Creation Office of Ishikawa Prefecture was set up in March 2011 to better manage the conservation of traditional Satoyama-Satoumi landscapes through the promotion of sustainable development of primary industries. He expressed his hope that the Noto GIAHS designation had provided a good opportunity for local people to reconsider their values and rediscover the beauty of their homelands, while also encouraging more people to come forward and contribute to the conservation of Satoyama.

When asked about their expectations for the Noto GIAHS and future OUIK research, the speakers expressed their hope that more policy-oriented research would be conducted on the Noto GIAHS and that periodical feedback from on-the-ground efforts be translated into policy recommendations for policymakers or community leaders to assist their conservation initiatives. They also shared their hopes of seeing a more vibrant Noto and sustainable agricultural production in the Noto GIAHS. Some members of the audiences also shared their hopes that historical and traditional cultural aspects would be revisited and considered in terms of the role they could play in conservation of the Noto GIAHS. All of the speakers felt that the seminar provided a rare and good opportunity for them to learn about the many active efforts being carried out in Noto Peninsula, and hoped to see more pathways for information exchange and possible collaboration on collective conservation of the Noto GIAHS.

Recorded and Summarized by:
Evonne Yiu (UNU-IAS)
11 March 2014
Annex 1

Programme of UNU-IAS OUIK “Sustainable Primary Industries (SPI)” Project Public Seminar

Research on Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Noto and Its Future Directions


13:30 Opening Remarks

Mr. Tsunao Watanabe, Director, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability Operating Unit Ishikawa/Kanazawa

13:40 Introduction of the OUIK-SPI Research Project

Mr. Akira Nagata, Senior Programme Coordinator, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability

14:00 Keynote Presentation: Research Findings of SPI Project in Noto

Dr. Bixia Chen, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Agriculture, University of the Ryukyus / Former Research Fellow, UNU-IAS OUIK

14:35 Coffee Break

14:55 Panel Discussion

Moderator: Prof. Koji Nakamura, UNU-IAS Visiting Professor/Deputy President, Kanazawa University

Panelists: Ms. Akiko Kado, Representative, Anamizu Town Regional Promotion Association

Mrs. Hiroko Tada, Owner, Shunran-no-sato Farm Inn

Mr. Shigenobu Fujita, Counsellor, Ohzora Agricultural Cooperative (JA Ohzora)

Mr. Tsutomu Okumoto, Director, Satoyama Creation Office, Ishikawa Prefecture

Commentator: Dr. Bixia Chen

Mr. Akira Nagata

16:25 Closing Remarks

Mr. Tsutomu Okumoto

16:30 End of Seminar